

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Jessie Matthias, 90, former auditor and realtor

"I rent a house in Hualani Court, next door to the Halekūlani behind the Royal Hawaiian [Hotel]. But there was no fences and you could walk through the garden when they built the theater, Waikīkī Theater. You could go to the show for seventy-five cents."

Jessie Matthias was born in Berryessa, California in 1896.

Her father, John Cameron, handled horses for the Onomea Sugar Plantation on the Big Island and brought the whole family over to Hawai'i on the Falls of Clyde in 1904.

After going back to the Mainland to finish high school, Jessie returned to the Big Island and taught school at Mountain View near 'Ōla'a.

Shortly thereafter, she moved to Honolulu where she met and married William Matthias, an office worker at 'Ewa Plantation, in 1917.

Her fondness of swimming and being near the ocean brought her to the shores of Waikīkī, where she has lived for some fifty years.

Tape No. 13-4-1-85

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jessie Matthias (JM)

March 1, 1985

Waikīkī, O'ahu

BY: Michael Mauricio (MM)

MM: This is an oral history interview with Jessie Matthias on March 1, 1985 at her home in Waikīkī. Interview conducted by Michael Mauricio.

Okay, Mrs. Matthias, could you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

JM: I was born in Berryessa, California. That's about forty-five miles north of Napa. It is now Lake Berryessa. That was September the 13th, 1896.

MM: And do you remember anything about that area when you were [a young child] . . .

JM: Beautiful. It was all country and farms. Lots of people. Everybody was related to each other. And you had blacksmiths and parks, and all kinds of nice things.

MM: What were your parents' names?

JM: Cameron. John Cameron and Lizzie Lane Low Cameron. My mother was born in Texas, my father in Arkansas. The three other children [JM's siblings] were born back there [Texas]. I'm the only one born in California. They are all much older than I am. Nineteen, twenty-three [years old], like that. And when this beautiful baby [JM] was born, and of course, she wasn't spoiled, she was just rotten.

MM: (Laughs) Were you the youngest?

JM: Yes. They're all grown. The family's quite old. My next to me was nineteen years older than me. That's why she [JM] was so spoiled. Brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers. She [JM] never did anything that was labor.

MM: What did your father do?

JM: He brought horses and mules to the Volcano Stables in Hilo before automobiles. And it was so beautiful that he liked it and stayed.

And then, we all came over. I made four trips on the Falls of Clyde or four-mastered sailing boats from San Francisco. Twenty-three days, twenty-six days [per trip].

MM: How long did you stay there in Berryessa?

JM: Well, we left when I was eight years old. That's when we came to Hawai'i. My mother, my sister, my brother. We went to Onomea. The first place we lived in Hawai'i was Onomea, which belonged to Onomea Sugar Company.

MM: And that was in 1904?

JM: Yes.

MM: How did you like your trip to the Islands?

JM: Beautiful. Kids, as long as they got a place to play and plenty to eat. Climb up the railings, and the poor people would make you get down, but you had fun. And on the boat, when it would be becalmed, the older boys could go swimming over the side. I don't know why the sharks didn't eat them, but they never did.

MM: (Laughs) Did you see any sharks?

JM: Plenty. Sharks, whales, flying fishes, anything. Sure. With that many days, you see everything.

MM: What was your first impression upon arriving in Hawai'i?

JM: Beautiful. 'Cause you had close neighbors. Went to school, had lots of fun. Everybody was kind and friendly to new people.

MM: Where did you folks land?

JM: In Hilo. You didn't come up to the pier. You came in on little boats. They anchored out aways and then you came in.

MM: And how did you . . .

JM: Then you rode in buses. Now, remember, no automobiles.

MM: In buses?

JM: In buses, mm hmm.

MM: What kind of buses? Horses?

JM: Well, they had horses that pulled them. And they had maybe three rows of seats. And that's all you had.

MM: What was the trip like then, from Hilo to Onomea?

JM: Well, you didn't do that too often 'cause that would be twenty miles. And I went to school in Onomea, and then I went to school in Pāpa'ikou, which still belongs to Onomea Sugar Company. Then my father got promoted to Pauka'a. P-A-U-K-A-A. He was a superintendent, and all the other people reported to him. He rode horseback to work, and then would come home and change horses a couple of times a day. They went to work at 4:15 in the morning and worked to 4:15 at night.

You had camps. You had Filipino camps, Japanee camps, Portugee camps. We talk of mixing. We never mixed. They all had their own camps. The Portuguese had big ovens where they baked bread.

MM: Did you ever bake bread? Or did your mom ever bake?

JM: My mother did. I had tried. And I knew that you put wood in the stove, but I didn't know that you continued to put wood, so they would go flat and they wouldn't get cooked. So after I started cooking after I married, I had a kerosene stove. And I got so I could bake, fry, do anything with a kerosene stove.

MM: When you got to the school, how old were you then?

JM: When I went to school?

MM: When you went to school.

JM: I went immediately from eight on.

MM: From eight on?

JM: Sure.

MM: What was school like? What kind of children attended the school?

JM: Everything. A few Japanese, Chinese, Spanish. Puerto Rican--not many Puerto Rican yet. They hadn't come. Hawaiian, everything. We all mixed. No distinction that way.

MM: Do you remember some of your teachers?

JM: Sure. Plenty of them. They're all dead, but I (chuckles) remember them.

MM: What was it like to take a class? To take classes on the plantation. What kind of subjects did they teach you?

JM: Well, you went barefooted. And you wore light, washable clothes. And you had lots of fun. You played games, you jumped rope, you hop-scotched. You did all kinds of things. It all was fun.

MM: First, you said you went to Onomea School, right?

JM: Mm hmm [yes].

MM: Then you went to . . .

JM: Pāpa'ikou. To the eighth grade. Then I went to Hilo High School for the ninth and tenth grades. And then, I went to America to graduate from high school. Remember, we were only the Sandwich Islands and we weren't quite a territory yet. [Hawai'i was annexed August 12, 1898, and its Territorial Government was established June 14, 1900.]

MM: Oh, when did you go back?

JM: I went back. . . . Now, let's see. I went back when I was fifteen. Seven years later. And then I graduated from high school in Napa. N-A-P-A, California. That is north of San Francisco. And graduated from high school, then came back to Hawai'i immediately. Stopped off in Honolulu and persuaded the Department of Public Instruction to give me a permit to teach school in Hawai'i. I had no [Normal School or college] diploma. I had only finished high school. And he gave me one [the permit], and I taught school at Mountain View, 'Ōla'a [on the Big Island]. Stayed with my sister, and her husband, and two children.

They had big trains on Hawai'i that went right by the door. 'Cause my sister's husband was the station manager, also had the plantation store, and he was manager of that. And my sister was the bookkeeper of the plantation store.

MM: How much money did you make teaching?

JM: Sixty dollars a month. And I paid twenty to my sister for room and board. But that went a long way then. A dollar was a great big piece of money.

MM: Did Mountain View seem like kind of an isolated area?

JM: Oh, no. You had a store, and a post office, and the train went right by the door. You had lots of people because you all went horseback riding. Every weekend we did something. Either went to Hilo or would go to the volcano and spend the night. Sit around the pit and watch the big flames go up in the air. But you were friendly. There would be five or six couples, and we all played games and sang songs, and played music. Everybody didn't go to bed with everybody then.

MM: There was some kind of social life there, then.

JM: Plenty of social life. Always had plenty in Hawai'i. Informal, but plenty of socializing.

MM: You traveled around mainly by horseback then?

JM: Oh, yes. But of course, you see. Now, if you went out the Hāmākua

Coast, which is where most of the plantations were, one right after another, each with their own sugar mill, now they don't have [individual sugar mills] 'cause they're too expensive and they don't make enough to do it. Right now, your sugar is very bad off.

MM: Did your parents stay in Onomea while you were in Mountain View?

JM: No, by that time, we have gone to California to live. And then my father was in an accident up by a big flume. And the flume had broken and hit him, and broke his ribs, which punctured his lungs and heart. And he died. In those days, you didn't have workmen's compensation. So you just were dead. The manager of the plantation at that time offered to adopt me. His name was John Key Moir. M-O-I-R. In fact, just this week, a William Moir died, and was born in Pāpa'ikou. I knew other sons and daughters. Fannie Moir, Hector, John, and Goodale. But I never heard of a William. And yet he was born there, so it must have been another brother after I left. It was in the paper this week.

MM: What year was that about?

JM: That he died? It was in the paper . . .

MM: No, I mean, your father.

JM: Oh, my father. That was in 1915 when we go to the Mainland. And then, we go to Napa, you see, where I graduate from high school. My father's gone.

MM: Then you returned to Hawai'i . . .

JM: In 1915, the minute I graduated from high school.

MM: How long did you stay in Mountain View?

JM: Just one year. Because the permit was only good for one year, then I was to come to Honolulu and go to the Normal School to get my certificate to be a teacher.

MM: Was that a requirement?

JM: To teach? Yes. You're supposed to have a diploma.

MM: From Normal School?

JM: Yes. But I had been raised here and felt I knew as much about local children as those Mainland Haoles that were coming to town. When I get to Honolulu, I went to Normal School but I didn't like it, so decided I was not going to be a teacher. So, I am walking down the mall, which is the mall now but was Fort Street at that time, and I was with a man who was the purchasing agent for the City and County. I don't remember how I met him, but anyway, we're walking along and we go by a beautiful wholesale-retail grocery store. I said, "I'd

like to work there." So, the man took me in and I got a job as an order clerk for ninety dollars a month.

MM: And what was the name of this company?

JM: That was May and Company, which in the back alley, used to roast Kona coffee and you could smell it all over Downtown. And the delivery carts had two little horses or two little mules that delivered your groceries.

MM: How did you get around town?

JM: You got around on electric trolley that went down King Street, across McCully to Kalākaua [Avenue], and up Kalākaua to the park [Kapi'olani Park], and that was it. And little girls could not stand on the running boards, only little boys. And as I think, we paid ten cents to ride. Right down here, we would ride.

MM: (Chuckles) Where were you staying at the time? When you first moved . . .

JM: I stayed at Fernhurst which belonged to the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], right there on King Street, oh, just a little ways from the City Hall now, is where that was. Then, they later tore it down and moved Fernhurst up onto Wilder Avenue. And at this point, we have no YW anywhere Downtown or in Waikīkī. [There is a Richards Street YWCA presently located in Downtown.] We have lots of YMs but no YWs. I don't know why.

MM: Were you a member of the YWCA?

JM: Oh, you could just join. You just moved in. Right now, I don't remember exactly what I paid to stay there, but there was about fifty or sixty other young girls. So I decided I was going to be a dressmaker. And I charged them three and a half [dollars] a day. But I do not like to rip, and if you want tucks I'm not taking them out the next day and putting in gathers. So I decided I didn't want to be a dressmaker. So, after becoming the clerk at May and Company, I got married on January the 20th, 1917.

MM: And this was to. . . .

JM: William Gwynne Matthias. With two T's, from Cardiff, Wales. With a beautiful voice, blue eyes, curly blond hair, and could sing and dance. Learned all your Hawaiian dances with swords and bamboo sticks and everything. Could hula, could play the ukulele, anything.

MM: How long had he been in the Islands?

JM: A couple of years.

MM: And he learned all that?

JM: Oh, yes, but then certain people learn everything musical or dancing in every country. And the Welsh boys seem to all have beautiful voices.

MM: How did you meet him?

JM: He was working at 'Ewa Plantation. At that point, there were seventeen single men at 'Ewa. They used to have dances once a month, and they would invite, through different people, eight or ten girls. They would pick us up and take us to 'Ewa, and then bring us back or we'd stay all night. They had beautiful dances with beautiful dinners. Everybody brought the food, not catered, brought. Each one did something. And they were lots of fun, and you looked forward to them.

MM: Where were those dances held?

JM: Right there at 'Ewa. They had a nice, big room, and they danced.

MM: A social hall?

JM: Mm hmm, on the plantation. Right where 'Ewa is now. The same mill was there. The manager was George Renton. R-E-N-T-O-N. In those days, if the manager died, his son or some relative became manager after him. And his son, George, became manager. He had other sons, Alan and Lewis.

MM: And you knew him well?

JM: Oh, yes. Because in those days, the manager of a plantation thought he was God. He told you what to wear and what to do. In fact, one day, he [George Renton, Sr.] said to me, "I didn't see you at church today." Fortunately, I could always have an answer. I said, "Well, if you'd been at the six o'clock Mass, you would have seen me." And I wasn't Catholic. That took care of the church. Then, I had a baby grand piano. And he decided I couldn't play it on Sunday, because maybe they could hear it over in the church.

MM: This church you're talking about . . .

JM: Is still right there in the middle of the park at 'Ewa.

MM: Middle of the park. Is it the Protestant church or the Catholic church?

JM: No, no. Protestant and Catholic. [Both churches are in the same general area, but JM is referring to the Protestant church.]

MM: You must have lived across the street then?

JM: Over here where all the houses were, right in a row, at 'Ewa. Remember? There was a side street. That's where I lived.

MM: Do you have any special events that you remember about 'Ewa that took place . . .

JM: Not other than your dancing and your horseback riding and trips that you took. But everybody was always very kind and lovely to you. You shared cooking, you shared everything. They had sewing clubs, they had all kinds of things they did. I was too young for that.

MM: Let's see . . .

JM: You're going to get into [World] War I.

MM: Did you mention what your husband did?

JM: He worked in the office at 'Ewa Plantation. Now, we moved to town. I don't particularly like plantation life as a grown person, so we come to town and then the husband gets drafted in World War I. He belonged to the National Guard and they were inducted. And he was at Schofield Barracks. I lived up on Poki Street. I think it was College [Street] then, and I had five girls, young girls, moved in with me. Four of them came from the Pineapple Island.

MM: Lāna'i?

JM: Lāna'i. They were Monroes. Four sisters. And the other girl, Maybelle Taylor, from Maui. Hāmākua Poko, Maui. And we had a Japanese cook, a yardman, and a washwoman. We had lots of fun.

MM: (Laughs) I bet, while your husband was away?

JM: No, he was at Schofield. He could come in on weekends. But I mean, we had fun. But outside of that, I don't mean that they all chased [after men]. We all did things together. With six gals, you can do anything you want. Play games, you know.

MM: What kind of things did you do then? Going out on the town?

JM: Uh uh, you didn't do much. They had dances down at the Armory in the middle of Downtown for people, for the soldiers and sailors. And they would invite us, come and get us, and take us home.

MM: This Armory is at 'Iolani Palace?

JM: Yes. Same one.

MM: Okay. How long did you stay at Poki Street?

JM: I stayed at Poki Street, now, let's think. Oh, when after the husband gets out, he goes to work for Trent Trust Company. And we moved to Matlock Avenue. And in 1921, I have a baby daughter. I went to the hospital, which was Kapi'olani Maternity Home, where the Mormon Temple is on Beretania Street. We walked down to the hospital. In those days, your doctor came and told the husband,

"You can go home and come back in a couple of hours," and [the husband said,] "I will be back." And by the time he came back, the baby was born and I was back in the bedroom. But I believe in taking a few whiffs of chloroform and having your baby, not remember the actual birth nor no pain or any that goes with it, which they promote now.

MM: Was that the standard practice back then?

JM: Sure.

MM: Chloroform?

JM: Yes. Much easier. Why go through the pain, to remember the pain at a birth when it isn't necessary? It's a bunch of baloney. The doctor's name was Dr. Alsup, A-L-S-U-P, who had a clinic on Bishop Street, Downtown.

MM: Let's see, what year did you have your child?

JM: March the 17th, 1921. Then, after living on Matlock, we bought a lot up in Mānoa on Kahawai Street for \$3,000 and built a house. And moved up there. And I moved across the street from Dr. and Mrs. Wayson, W-A-Y-S-O-N, who is the head of the Board of Health, or whatever you called it then. She is the lady who gave me King Kalākaua's buffet. I had it in my home and later gave it away.

MM: A buffet? You mean a . . .

JM: A sideboard with a big mirror over the top. Now, we're living in Mānoa, and then by now, my husband has gone to Lewers & Cooke as a treasurer. And we sell the little house on Kahawai and build another one across the street on the same street. This time, we paid \$5,000 for a 10,000 square foot lot. Built a beautiful house, the first house to use canec, which is a cooling plasterboard that we put in the living room. Had a high ceiling and a beautiful nursery off the dining room. Also was up off the ground three or four feet, so that your ground was treated for termites, but you had beautiful Hawaiian hardwood floors and Oriental rugs. Three bedrooms and only one bath, but the bath was down the hall so everybody had access to it. You had a servant's quarter in the backyard with the laundry room, the servant's room, and a two-car garage.

MM: Did you have a servant?

JM: Oh, yes. We all had servants. That isn't bragging. That's the way you lived. They lived in the cottage in the backyard. You had vegetable gardens, you had flowers, you had avocado trees. I even had a lychee tree but it never had any lychees. We had swings for the children and you left your children home with the servant. If you went out, you didn't take them with you. And if you had a party, you had them in your home. You didn't go to a bar or a hotel to entertain. You entertained at home. I could handle ten tables of

bridge, which is forty people, in my living room. 'Ōhi'a floors.

MM: Did you start playing bridge back then?

JM: Yes. I could play bridge. And we played cribbage. We played dominoes. We played anything that was gambling. And you made beer in the laundry room. Even though I didn't drink, I made beer and I made wine.

MM: Could you describe the process?

JM: Ho, ho, not now. You had a recipe and you followed it.

MM: Basically, what did you do? Did you have all your crock pots?

JM: Oh, yes. Great big ones. I had a picture once, with my baby standing in the big crock with her head sticking out the top for the Christmas card.

MM: Was this during Prohibition?

JM: Oh, yes. 'Ōkolehao, but you made that. And there was still plenty sake, but that was the Oriental. But the Hawaiians made 'ōkolehao. But never drank, so I had no trouble with that. And never smoked. Because when I was a little girl, my father used to go out on the lanai after dinner and smoke a big long cigar. So, one night I said, "My, that looks like fun."

And he said, "Would you like one?"

I said, "I'd love one. And then I can spit over the rail." Well, I had one and I was so sick I felt like spitting my shoes over the rail. That taught me all the smoking I ever did in my life.

MM: (Chuckles) Did you learn the same lesson by drinking?

JM: No, never drank. I don't like the taste. And I never do anything I don't want to. Never mind what everybody else is doing. If I don't want to, I don't do it. People don't influence me.

MM: Since you came back to your plantation days, tell me what your house was like in Onomea.

JM: Oh, beautiful. I have a picture with the galvanized iron roof, and we collected our own rainwater from the roof in the big barrel to drink and wash our hair. We had running water in a little flume in the kitchen and in the back laundry room, but we didn't drink it.

MM: A little flume?

JM: Yeah, a little wooden flume running water all the time. It just ran. And there was this big wooden tub that kids could swim in, in the cold water. But you had one hot bath a week in the big galvanized

iron tub. And you got scrubbed with soap and hot water. That was it for the week.

MM: Did you have an indoor toilet or . . .

JM: You had an outdoor little house with stars over the seat. You had a little low one for the children. And you had a walk, a wooden walk, that went to the little outhouse about thirty, forty feet from the house. Do you know what an outhouse is? Have you ever seen one?

MM: Mm hmm. Well, like I said, I was brought up in 'Ewa. We had one. (Laughs)

JM: How long ago?

MM: Oh, this was back as far as, when I left 'Ewa, 1967. Recent.

JM: Oh, and they still had outhouses?

MM: Mm hmm. Yeah.

JM: See, that's why you moved to town, so you could have one in the bathroom.

MM: (Laughs) One inside the house.

JM: Mm hmm, my bathroom's inside the house.

MM: Okay. Getting back to Honolulu again.

JM: Okay, now, I have gone to Santa Barbara with this only daughter to an endocrinologist's clinic. She's only three, four feet tall at grown [as an adult]. She was the first human being to use this growth hormone from the University of California in Berkeley [developed] by an Austrian doctor, Dr. Englebach. And we got to go to that clinic through the man who was head of the Tax Department. Now, wait a minute. His son has an undertaking parlour now. What's their names?

MM: Borthwick?

JM: Borthwick. Mr. Borthwick was head of the Tax Department, and he was a friend of this doctor's. And they made the arrangement. I had to have the patient there. I did not pay to go. So, I moved to Santa Barbara. Okay. While I'm there, we have the big 1929 stock crash, and we had purchased Booth Tract up in Pauoa Valley, and we lost it. We had paid \$360,000 to Hawaiian Trust. And in those days, bankruptcy was a disgrace. So we sold the Mānoa house and we had five acres up Wilhemina Rise and we had different things to wipe off the disgrace. Okay, that left me with nothing. The husband was dead in a couple of years. I couldn't die, or take up drinking, or dope because I

had a daughter to raise. So I go back to work at the Bank of Hawai'i, and then, after that, I go to Hawaiian Trust. After the Bank of Hawai'i, I went to Patten's Bookstore on Hotel Street as office manager. Then it was sold to a Haole man that was an Oriental lover. He put a Japanese man over me. And I said, "Don't you realize we are at war with Japan?" Well, he still wanted the man, so I said, "I will work with him, but I will never work under one." So, I went out for a job and I had at least five jobs in two hours, because the men were being drafted for World War II, and they were happy to find somebody that would come. I went to work for Von Hamm Young, having charge of garages which they had over eight agencies for automobiles, which now is against the law. But they had them in different locations under different names but all belonged to Von Hamm Young.

MM: Oh, by this time, you were living in Waikiki already?

JM: No, not yet. So, I come back from there, and I live with my sister out in Kaimuki on Harding Avenue. And then, I rent a house in Haulani Court, next door to the Halekulani behind the Royal Hawaiian. The Royal Hawaiian was built in 1927. But there was no fences and you could walk through the garden when they built the theater, Waikiki Theater. You could go to the show for seventy-five cents. And I had two bedrooms and a lanai. I rented a back bedroom always to young men, because I did not want a woman who had the stomachache and wanted to stay home and wash her clothes and feed. So I only did boys.

Now, we go through the war. All the women that lived in the court went home or were moved out, and we had fourteen cottages with only young men in uniform that were working for the United States government, were in civilian clothes, [and] put in all the big corporations in Honolulu. Then, nobody had a wife. Just boys, young. I had no trouble. I fed 10,000 of them.

MM: Ten thousand? (Laughs)

JM: Easy. Because this one wanted to come to dinner and that one wanted to come to dinner. Then, behind me was a big huge vacant lot. That's just where the Territorial Hotel was built. We had a rest camp with a hundred men every ten days. They had dancing, boat races, boats to take us out on, bicycles to go riding up Kalakaua Avenue, shows, everything. By that time, I have a daughter, [twenty, twenty-one] years old, with all her friends. And they have a grand time. Now, my house backs onto this fence in between, and we have young men coming through to meet the girls, invite them to dances. You'd never know that we were at war. We had a beautiful time.

MM: What do you remember of that December 7th day?

JM: Well, a woman next door called me and said, "The Japanese are attacking."

I said, "Now, you know that's impossible. And you know I sleep on Sunday morning." I wouldn't even get up and look. After a while, I get up. By that time, they're gone. That afternoon, they were telling us to stay off the roads, so I get in the car and I go driving. I ask everybody in the twelve apartments, "Is there anything you'd like?" One wanted eggs, one wanted bread, one wanted milk. So, I went to a store, and came back with all the things.

MM: In the neighborhood?

JM: In this court. There was fourteen cottages in the court. Haulani. I lived there twenty years from 1933 to '53. The first female auditor in the Hawaiian Islands, the first female cashier at Hawaiian Trust in the Hawaiian Islands. Not bragging, just the word, female.

MM: When you first moved to Waikīkī, could you describe to me in your own words what the area was like?

JM: Sure. I can look right down now and see the Moana [Hotel] with all the pretty palm trees. Down the road a little way where Kūhiō Beach is, that's where Prince Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole lived with his wife. I used to go and have lunch with her. Next door to them was Bill Kanakanui and who I think became a rear admiral. Then a little further, Judge [Harry] Steiner's home, the Cleghorn home, all kinds of people. Right on Kalākaua where I can see right now from my apartment.

MM: Of course, there weren't all these big hotels in the way.

JM: Well, that, you can only go back twenty years and there's no hotels. Fifteen years, there was none of this stuff. It's too bad. If they had only gone seven or eight stories, which would be much nicer because all we'd need is a good earthquake to take care of all your high rises. I also lived on the Ala Wai.

Oh, I haven't become a real estate person yet. Okay. I'm at Hawaiian Trust, and this only daughter who now is married. Her husband was killed in Korea. She's living in Olympia, Washington. So I go up to visit her. And I come home, and she is drowned. So, after seven years, I decide to change residence and change occupation. Because everybody in Hawaiian Trust, about 180 people, all knew June [JM's daughter], and that was hard because they all would talk about her. So, I go into real estate.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JM: [JM is talking about the blackouts during World War II.] . . . why we all didn't have pneumonia. Because we put plyboards on our windows, and we had little lamps on the floor with covers over

them. And the sweat would run down. Then we would open the windows and let some breeze in. Then go through that about every half hour. It was really very, very uncomfortable. But the younger people would go down at the beach and sit under a big covering at the end of this court and watch things going on. There was barbed wire all on the sand, but there was always music next door at the camp [Fort DeRussy] and activity, things going on. Had friends living all around Waikīkī that shouldn't be out after blackout, but would come a block or two to visit and go back. No, it wasn't that bad, really. Of course, we had the boys in and the boys next door at the camp. After each ten flights or whatever you call them, they were allowed a vacation and they would be brought to R and R [Rest and Recreation] next door to me. Then, of course, we [the U.S. military] took over the Moana; we took over the Royal Hawaiian, and had sailors in the Royal Hawaiian with little pants hanging out the windows and things, but that was war. But as far as terrible, uncomfortable things, no. The hospitals were full, but then they were away from us. We didn't see that much. But Hawai'i was very friendly and kind, and we were kind to all the men in uniform. There was thousands of them. There'd be at least 150,000 nearly every day passing through. You couldn't believe it.

MM: Oh, my. Did they ever get on your nerves?

JM: Oh, sure. But then, you're young enough that you don't care, you know. No big deal. Downtown, though, there were sailors and soldiers by the dozens. There was prostitute lines, there were bars.

MM: Was there that kind of problem in Waikīkī?

JM: Mm hmm. But not like Waikīkī today. Today is more prostitutes on Kūhiō Avenue than we had in the whole town in houses down in Kalihi. It [the area] was called Iwilei. And they were under police, and under Board of Health, and were not on the streets. Never.

MM: Those were actually legalized then? Those were legalized?

JM: Yes. You had whorehouses.

MM: Redlight district.

JM: Yeah, mm hmm. Whatever you want to call them. But they stood in line to get in them. You'd see a whole line. Once in a while you'd see a little old lady in it because she didn't know what they were standing in line for.

MM: (Laughs)

JM: I mean that.

MM: Okay. Just after the war, there's a big tidal wave. Do you remember that. Tidal wave?

JM: Oh, sure.

MM: Nineteen forty-six.

JM: Yes. I was living right on the water. And the big waves came through this vacant lot next door. We said, "My, the waves are high this morning," and did nothing about it. Except we went down to the beach, and the water had receded two or three hundred yards to see the bottom of the ocean with the rocks and the green weeds. I went to work, and I told them this story, and it was April 1. They said, "Ooh, good. Tell us some more." They didn't believe me. Then, it dawned on them on the radios that there was a tidal wave. But it did nothing except come through our yard and go back out. But that was it. You see, because we're all built up off the ground. You're not flat on the floor so that the water could go in. We didn't have any water in our houses.

MM: Did it damage the hotels any? Like the Royal Hawaiian?

JM: Mm mm [no].

MM: No?

JM: It came up, but they were all up. Came across Kalākaua Avenue, but went back out. That was what? Sixty-six--no.

MM: Forty-six. Nineteen forty-six.

JM: Forty-six. Right after the war.

MM: Now, I guess right after the war, they begin to talk of Kalākaua realignment, is it?

JM: Well, you still had Kapi'olani [Boulevard], but it wasn't paved. It was a dirt road. Our beaches were much prettier. They had no walls. They had no groins. And you had big, wide beaches. The waves would come in and go out. Now, the army is in town, after the war. Loads of them stayed. DeRussy was an active fort. They started these walls and groins. That takes your sand out when it comes in, and washes out. Kūhiō [Beach], they built a big groin. Now, 1923, I have an original etching before we dug the Ala Wai. Every valley had a stream, so that made it marshy. Two or three feet with little ducks swimming around in 1923. After that, we dug the Ala Wai, draining off the water that made it swampy.

And now, in 1964, we [Tropic Shores, the company JM was working for at the time] decide we're going to build a condominium over on the Ala Wai right around the corner of Ka'iulani, between Ka'iulani and Lili'uokalani [Avenues], twenty stories high, called the Waikī Skyliner. We put our money in; it didn't get built for two years. And then, we moved in, in June, 1966. Is where I am sitting at this minute. A hundred and twenty-two apartments, twenty floors--the first five are covered parking. Two penthouses. And in those days,

whoever the developer was got one of the penthouses, and whoever handled the project got the other one. And the architect who worked for a Mr. Guili, G-U-I-L-I, has one of the penthouses; and Mary Savio, the wife--the female in the developers of Tropic Shores, got the other penthouse. I was fortunate to buy a one-bedroom. Now, on each floor there are eight apartments, two one-bedroom, number two on the Ala Wai and number seven facing the Moana and facing Tusitala [Street]. They were at that time thirty-five dollars a square foot to build, and are now \$140 a square foot to build. I have a beautiful lanai, looking at Tantalus, Mānoa and St. Louis Heights, which I will never lose. Because with our moratorium, you can only build so many stories depending on the size of your lot, and none of the lots on Ka'iulani Street are big enough to go further than four or five stories.

MM: You first bought this---you put money down . . .

JM: Yes.

MM: . . . in 1963 . . .

JM: Only two or three thousand. And they didn't pay you interest. Maybe it's going to get built and maybe it's not. But that's part of the gamble that you play.

MM: Where exactly were you living?

JM: At the time?

MM: At the time. I mean, after 1953.

JM: Over on Lili'uokalani [Avenue] in a little cottage. Right over here. Then I left Lili'uokalani and moved over into Makiki on Liholiho Street. But when you wanted to go swimming, the ocean was five miles away, so I have to move back to Waikīkī. So I bought into the Skyliner.

MM: Was that one of the reasons why you moved to Waikīkī in the first place?

JM: Yes. I only swam in the ocean. I don't like pools. I try to swim three or four times a week. I can put on my bathing suit and walk down to the beach by myself or with somebody.

MM: You must have spent a lot of time out on the beach, then.

JM: Yes, I do. Used to swim every day, but I don't anymore.

MM: Did you know a lot of the beach boys?

JM: Knew all of them at one time. Most of them are dead, but "Steamboat Bill" [Mokuahi, Sr.] and a few of them that still come and see me when I walk down.

MM: Was there a lot of tourists, say . . .

JM: Then or now?

MM: Then.

JM: Oh, you had maybe 150,000 a year. But now we're talking about 5 million for 1985. That's a few too many. Because they go down the street eating and throw their cups, throw their paper plates, napkins on the street. We never did that.

MM: Do you remember having those lei sellers and curio stands?

JM: Oh, yes. We had them Downtown on Maunakea and all along there. I have books with hundreds of them in them. Beautiful ones. Oh you'll love this, a plumeria lei cost fifty cents. And if you waited till after the boat left, it cost a quarter. Carnation leis were seventy-five cents and a dollar. But they weren't big, bulky things like they sell you now that roll off your shoulder, that don't stay put. I had an eighty-fifth birthday and one of my friends gave me an 'ilima lei. It cost twenty-five dollars, one day. And then I met a woman, and she said, "Did you make that paper lei?"

And I said, "Lady, it's got 600 blossoms in it and it's alive."

MM: (Laughs) I guess they don't realize how thin that 'ilima [blossom] is. It's very . . .

JM: It looks like a buttercup. And they are tiny little daisy-like things. It takes 600 to make a very small, little lei around your neck. We have paper ones that look very much like them, but not the real one. Each island has its own flower. The lehua is a red flower, very dainty with little petals on it, but teeny, teeny ones. And they claim if you pick one, it'll make it rain. Well, there happens to be one around the corner from where I live and I generally pick one and put it in my hair, but it hasn't affected the rain.

MM: (Chuckles) Were there a lot of lei sellers in the Waikīkī area?

JM: More Downtown than there were in Waikīkī, because that's where your traffic went to go to the airport or to come back. Or the steamers were all right Downtown. They [lei sellers] sat on the street, eight or ten in a row and sold you leis.

(JM gets book.)

JM: There's a few of them.

MM: This is in the Downtown area.

JM: Yes. This is before you have buses and things to go out to the airport where they have the lei stands. I have a girlfriend that

owns one of the lei stands. Maile Lee.

MM: On those steamer days, then, did a lot of the tourists from the boats come to Waikiki to stay?

JM: Sure, mm hmm. That's all there was. There was only the Young Hotel Downtown. There never has been hotels Downtown. And we didn't have a single Oriental-owned hotel in Waikiki till ten years ago.

MM: Until ten years ago?

JM: Mm hmm. And now, nearly every one of them is Oriental-owned. That's because they offer more than the people are asking. And it's kind of hard to refuse. That's all. That's how they're getting in.

MM: You're referring to Kenji Osano?

JM: Mm hmm [yes].

MM: What are some of the major changes that . . .

JM: Well, it has changed the people. Everything's so expensive. And we talk about street people, beach people with no homes, hungry. Unbelievable.

MM: Did you have those kind of problems back then?

JM: No. Never had any. They could raise their own vegetables, or their relatives took care of them. But of course, you didn't have the number of people. See, now you have thousands of people that came from the Philippines, Japan, China, anywhere. [JM looks out of her window.] That tower right there is Hemmeter [Center]. He [Chris Hemmeter] built two towers. No, right straight ahead. No, not there, over behind King's Alley. See that big clock? That is one of the towers.

MM: On the old Biltmore site.

JM: Mm hmm. They knocked the Biltmore down. And it wasn't that old. It was a poorly built building, but not that old. I went and watched it fall down.

MM: I saw that on the news. I remember. You were into real estate by this time.

JM: Mm hmm. Real estate, I go into that right after I move from Haulani. Yeah, now, you see I went in it in about '59--no, before that, because I was fifty-nine years old when I go into real estate. In those days, you had to have two-year residential requirement, and you took the test and if you passed, you had to prove in two years that you really had sold and knew what you were doing to take the broker or realtor test, which I did, making me sixty-one when I get my "R." And by that time, your brain isn't supposed to be working.

But that is a few years ago. I am still in real estate, have been with the company twenty years, right downtown in the heart of Waikīkī.

MM: Did you ever deal in Waikīkī land?

JM: Oh, yes. I did many of these subdivisions, or your condos, or residential sold in Kāhala. We all sold everywhere. We also had an office in Hawai'i Kai, we had an office in Kailua, and one Downtown. And we took turns serving in the different offices. Sold anywhere, any kind, or the other islands.

MM: What kind of people still live in Waikīkī, would you say? I mean, just the residents, not counting the tourists.

JM: The owners? Well, now you see loads of older couples that have sold their homes and moved into a condo because if they want to go on a trip, they lock the door and don't have to worry. Because if you leave a home, they would steal the furniture and dig up the plants, and you'd have to pay somebody to stay in it or rent it. But that has become very bad so that loads of the old locals live in condos.

MM: In condos now. Not so much the little houses down here?

JM: No, no. We're gradually tearing them down because your taxes are too high. You can't afford it. Have districts that are residential like Mānoa, Nu'uanu, Kaimukī that are little cottages, but their taxes are very bad. And they finally have to sell because they can't afford the taxes.

MM: What's the going price for a square foot around this area?

JM: Well, if it's in a condo, it's \$140 or \$150 a square foot. And that's kind of expensive. Everything is overpriced so dreadfully, but so is our food, everything we do. Our tomatoes, our lettuce, anything. String beans, a dollar twenty-seven. Then the next day it might be eighty-nine [cents], they're having a special. And I pay over two dollars and something, \$2.29, for a half-gallon of milk.

MM: Robbery. (Chuckles)

JM: Yes. Used to have a cow in the backyard and you had your own milk, and you raised your own vegetables. I paid sixty-five cents for one green pepper. I used to have a pepper plant in the backyard that had them. And the little red ones that we make different things with, try and find them.

MM: Since you've lived in Waikīkī for so long, was there a big concern about crime?

JM: Mm mm. Once in a while, you might have had a burglary because none of us locked our doors. Never thought of it. And your neighbor, if it saw a stranger, would have screamed and yelled. Everybody took

care of everybody. That's a different story. We've gone lock crazy. You have chains, you have dead bolts, and a lock in the doorknob. Well, I have a lock in the doorknob and that's it. And I have a screen door, the only one in the building, but that's me.

MM: I know back in 1931 there was that big rape--the Massie case . . . [Synopsis of Massie case: On September 12, 1931, Thalia Massie was allegedly beaten and raped by a group of local men in the vicinity of what is now Ala Moana Park. One of the defendants in the rape trial, Joseph Kahahawai, was killed by Lt. Thomas Massie (Mrs. Massie's husband), Albert O. Jones, and Edward J. Lord. They, along with Mrs. Granville (Grace) Fortescue, mother of Mrs. Massie, were tried for murder, found guilty, and sentenced to ten years in prison. On May 4, 1932, Governor Lawrence Judd commuted the sentence to one hour.]

JM: The Massie case? That's when I lived in Mānoa. The woman lived next door to me on Kahawai Street. But she [Thalia Massie] was a mental case. She was, oh, with a mentality of about a nine-year-old. When I say that, I had a big cat with a bell on. And he was next door in her house, 'cause I could hear him walking with the bell. So I go over and I say, "I want my cat."

She said, "I don't have him."

I said, "But I can hear the bell."

And she used to walk up in Woodlawn at two or three o'clock in the morning. And she was out with some young man when she gets picked up by a bunch of local boys. And they didn't rape her. She'd already been raped before she got in, but maybe it wasn't rape. And then, she sues them. And then, her mother came up out from the Mainland, Mrs. [Grace] Fortescue. And she's the one that brought the big lawyer [Clarence Darrow] that did all the suing. And then, they took one of the boys that was at court. And as he came out they picked him up, and killed him, and cut him up, and were going out Diamond Head to get rid of the body when they were stopped. And it was strictly murder. And the husband was a nice little guy. He was a lieutenant in the navy. That was your Massie case. And then, of course, by that time, they got the governor to, you know, do a lot of blah, blah, blah.

MM: So, you didn't feel it was . . .

JM: Rape? No. Never did.

MM: Well, you didn't feel that it was a big enough thing to keep you from moving to Waikīkī then?

JM: No, because that was in Mānoa. What's the connection? None. Mm mm, no. And not being afraid, you see. I am not afraid of just being afraid. I can still walk from the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel] down to my home and back and never have anybody touch me. But

that's to the people that are coming home at two o'clock out of a bar and some guys come along in a car and say, "I will take you home," and you get in. Forget it. That's all. When you read about these rape cases, where were they, and how did they meet the people? Ninety percent of the rape things you hear about are baloney. Ones where they break into hotel rooms, that's a different story. But then, they're generally high on dope on something to do it. Not just normal people.

MM: At one time in Waikīkī, we had a lot of, I guess back in the '60s, mid-sixties, where the hippies came in.

JM: Oh, yes, we had those. But they had more on the other islands than we had. On Maui, especially. But that was just groups of people that were looking to live for nothing and have you take care of them. We weren't as bad on O'ahu as they were the other islands.

MM: And the Hare Krishna groups?

JM: Yeah, those, we still have.

MM: Are they still out on the streets here?

JM: Yeah, but then they have to move. They can't just stand still. So they move back and forth. They try to sell you something. Put a flower in your hair and then hold out their hand. And I say, "Don't touch me." And they don't touch me. That's all.

MM: Generally speaking then, you enjoyed living in the Waikīkī area?

JM: I wouldn't live anywhere else. I thoroughly enjoy this. To stay home or to. . . . And there's beautiful programs on the TV in the morning that you never know exist. I don't mean serials, I mean gambling games, all kinds of things.

MM: You sit at home and watch a lot of TV? No?

JM: Not particularly. Not series. I watch in the morning. I have, oh, "Scrapple," I have "Wheel of Fortune," and I have "Card Sharks," which you win 10, 20, 25,000 [dollars]. And then you have Dick Clark on at eleven o'clock which has a 10,000, a 25,000 [dollar prize], no monkey business, strictly answer questions and guess. But it's fun.

MM: Okay. I think . . .

JM: That's it?

MM: That should be enough for today.

END OF INTERVIEW

WAIKĪKĪ, 1900 - 1985: ORAL HISTORIES

Volume I

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